

Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, October 24, 2006

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Verdict in Ricky's death due soon

BY JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

October 24, 2006

LANSING -- The trial of Lisa Holland, the foster mother accused of open murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of her foster child and adopted son Ricky Holland, could wrap up today after more than five weeks.

Defense attorneys for the 33-year-old Holland said they have one more defense witness to call -- the defendant's mother, Betty Taylor, of Williamston -- before resting their case. The defense called four witnesses Monday -- three police officers and Lisa Holland's sister -- after Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency rested his case shortly before 2 p.m.

After Betty Taylor testifies today, Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Paula Manderfield is expected to listen to defense attorney Andrew Abood's arguments for a directed verdict. Abood will argue that the prosecution did not prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt and will ask the judge to render a verdict of not guilty without sending it to the jury.

If Manderfield denies that request, attorneys are likely to begin closing arguments this afternoon followed by Manderfield instructing the jury deciding Lisa Holland's guilt or innocence in Ricky's death in 2005.

The 50th and last prosecution witness, Dr. Elaine Pomeranz of the University of Michigan, testified that the jury could conclude that Ricky was the victim of Pediatric Condition Falsification, a diagnosis she was not directly allowed to make because she had considered more information than was admitted during Lisa Holland's trial that began Sept. 11.

PCF occurs when a child's parent or caretaker either causes or exaggerates medical symptoms of a child in order to subject the child to unnecessary medical examinations or treatments. Pomeranz testified that PCF is a form of child abuse.

Earlier Monday, Lisa Holland's father, Tom Taylor, invoked his Fifth Amendment right not to testify in his daughter's murder trial. Ferency has named Tom Taylor a coconspirator in Ricky's death, although no criminal charges have been brought.

Lisa Holland's sister Jane Gauss, a registered nurse who works at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, testified that she saw a close, loving relationship between Ricky and his adoptive mother.

"They had a really wonderful relationship," said Gauss, who said Ricky frequently helped his mother. She described Ricky as a "very happy child."

Gauss said she thought Lisa Holland's husband, Tim Holland, was in charge of disciplining Ricky and that he frequently chastised the boy for making mistakes.

Under questioning by Ferency, Gauss said she was not aware that Ricky had not seen a primary care physician since February 2002 and had not seen his psychiatrist since July 2004.

Gauss said that Tim Holland, who has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in his son's death, told her he thought all doctors were "quacks" and that he didn't want Ricky to see a doctor.

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Published October 24, 2006

Lisa's dad invokes Fifth

Man won't testify for defense about night Ricky died

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Lisa Holland's father invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination Monday during the Williamston woman's trial.

What's next

- Lisa Holland's trial is expected to conclude today, more than five weeks after testimony began. Defense attorneys are expected to call their final witness, Lisa's mother.
- Both Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency and Lisa Holland's co-counsel Andrew Abood requested about 1 1/2 hours for their closing arguments, which should begin in the afternoon. Ferency also will be allowed about 15 additional minutes for rebuttal.

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- [Ricky Holland case](#)

Tom Taylor of Williamston said on the stand that he consulted a lawyer, who advised him to invoke his constitutional right to remain silent because he is a potential target of the investigation.

Attorneys for Lisa Holland, who is charged with murder in the July 2005 death of her adopted son Ricky, had subpoenaed her father to testify.

Taylor, 76, was in the Hollands' Williamston home the night 7-year-old Ricky died, according to testimony by Lisa's husband, Tim Holland, who has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the case. The trial is in its sixth week.

Taylor slowly hobbled to the witness stand on Monday.

He wore headphones so he could hear questions from both Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield and Lisa Holland's co-counsel Mike Nichols.

"I don't hear too good," Taylor said, later adding that he didn't understand he could be charged with a crime.

Lisa Holland's eyes appeared bloodshot from tears as she watched her father.

Ricky was 'grinning'

Also Monday, Lisa Holland's sister, Jane Gauss, recalled the last time she saw Ricky on June 24, 2005: He was bounding down a hallway of the Hollands' recently purchased home in Williamston, wrapped in a carpet remnant, "grinning from ear to ear."

Gauss, one of five witnesses to testify for the defense Monday, also said Lisa didn't tell her what happened to Ricky until the end of January 2006, about the time Tim Holland led authorities to the boy's remains.

"She said Ricky didn't run away ... that something horrible had happened in the house," the 47-year-old Haslett woman said. "She was afraid of Tim."

Gauss also described Tim Holland as an overbearing father.

"He was just always correcting (Ricky) ... just kind of riding him."

Gauss added that her sister's relationship with her husband shifted in recent years, and Tim Holland became more controlling.

She said Tim Holland was in charge of discipline.

At times, he would take Ricky out of the room, and when the boy returned he would be "very subdued" and "dejected."

Gauss, a registered nurse at Sparrow Hospital, said Ricky was a happy, outgoing child, who enjoyed spending time with Lisa Holland.

When asked if her sister loved Ricky, Gauss said "absolutely."

Gauss told Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency that she never discussed her testimony with her sister.

'Died a slow death'

Also Monday, Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Frank Mraz recounted a Sept. 26, 2006, interview with Tim Holland, during which he said Lisa likely killed Ricky by suffocating him with a pillow.

Mraz said Tim Holland believed the boy died when he went to a nearby Citgo gas station the night of July 1, 2005.

"Tim Holland told me Ricky died a slow death," Mraz testified.

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October 24, 2006

Lisa Holland's dad refuses to testify on her behalf

He invokes the Fifth Amendment after being advised he could face charges in Ricky's death.

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

LANSING -- Final arguments are expected this afternoon in the murder trial of Lisa Holland, after her short defense took a surprising twist Monday when her father refused to testify on her behalf.

Appearing confused and disoriented, Thomas Taylor invoked the Fifth Amendment's right against self-incrimination, saying a lawyer advised him he could be charged in the death of his 7-year-old grandson, Ricky Holland of Williamston.

Taylor appeared dazed and had trouble comprehending the proceedings. He had trouble hearing and struggled to answer when defense attorney Mike Nichols asked why he wouldn't testify for his daughter, who faces life in prison.

"Why would I be charged?" Taylor asked. "I didn't do anything."

Michael Ferency, an Ingham County assistant prosecutor, has labeled Taylor a "co-conspirator" in Ricky's death on July 1, 2005.

Lisa's husband, Tim Holland, 37, who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, has told jurors that Taylor was at the family's home several times when Ricky was abused, helped restrain him and suggested relatives get their "stories straight" after his death.

Prosecutors allege Lisa Holland, 34, killed her adopted son with a hammer, then covered up the crime for months until Tim Holland led detectives to his body in January.

Without Taylor, Lisa Holland's defense consists of just a handful of witnesses -- three Ingham County sheriff's detectives, a jail guard and family members. Two more relatives are expected to testify today before the defense rests.

Without Taylor, the star witness for Holland on Monday was her sister, Jane Gauss of Haslett, who portrayed her as a loving mother who gave Ricky everything he needed and lavished him with action figures and other toys.

Gauss, a nurse, called Tim Holland a stern father who disciplined the kids and controlled every detail of his wife's daily life.

She broke into tears recalling the last time she saw Ricky alive on June 24, 2005. Contradicting Tim Holland's testimony that Ricky was near death when he returned from a business trip, Gauss said the boy was laughing and happy because he wrapped himself in a carpet remnant.

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Dad refuses to testify for child murder suspect Lisa Holland

10/24/2006, 7:38 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The father of child murder defendant Lisa Holland has refused to testify in his daughter's defense, citing his right not to incriminate himself.

Holland, 33, of Williamston is on trial on first-degree child abuse and felony murder charges in the July 2005 death of her adopted son Ricky, 7. Her husband Tim Holland, 37, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and testified against his wife.

Final arguments were expected Tuesday afternoon.

On Monday, defense witness Thomas Taylor invoked the Fifth Amendment's right against self-incrimination and said a lawyer advised him he could be charged in his grandson's death.

Lisa Holland defense lawyer Mike Nichols asked Taylor why he would not testify for his daughter.

"Why would I be charged?" Taylor asked. "I didn't do anything."

Ingham County Assistant Prosecutor Michael Ferency has called Taylor a coconspirator in Ricky's death. Taylor has not been charged.

Lisa Holland's sister, Jane Gauss of Haslett, called her sister a loving and generous mother.

Gauss, a nurse, testified for the defense that Tim Holland was a stern father who disciplined the children and tightly controlled his wife's life.

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Suprise Twist In Lisa Holland Trial

Oct 23, 2006 06:15 PM EDT

(TV-5) -- The prosecution rested its case today against Lisa Holland. The defense plans to rest its case tomorrow, October 24th.

To recap the events, it was in July of last year that 7 year old Ricky Holland went missing, and it wasn't until January that Tim Holland led authorities to the boy's remains. In September, Tim pleaded guilty to second degree murder in the boy's death. He has since taken the stand against his wife.

Lisa's father and sister, Jane Gauss, testified today. Jane Gauss testified that Ricky was a "happy little boy." She also said that Tim Holland was the discipline giver in the household. She testified that Tim was "tough" on Ricky at family gatherings.

Lisa Holland's father took the witness stand, and in a surprise move, pleaded the 5th. Charges might be filed against Lisa's father after the completion of her trial.



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Article published Oct 24, 2006

Nowak: Death of son was an accident

In two days, Keith Nowak will stand before a Monroe County judge who probably will order him to spend at least the next 15 years in prison for killing his infant son.

From inside jail, Mr. Nowak said he clearly understands this and accepts responsibility for his actions. But what he does not accept - what he adamantly denies even though he has pleaded no contest to second-degree murder - is that he lost his temper that early morning and purposely caused the death of his 2-month-old son, Andrew.

"I know I caused the injuries," Mr. Nowak said in an interview with The Evening News from the Monroe County jail, where he has been incarcerated for almost a year. "I never squeezed or shook him. I'm not like that. I have no reason to lie because I'm going to prison. I know that."

During an hour-long interview, Mr. Nowak, 30, tearfully acknowledged making mistakes on Nov. 26 that led to the death of his son, most notably taking eight to 10 Vicodin tablets while taking care of the baby.

His mistakes, he said, included not calling 911 after falling on top of his son. Mr. Nowak said Andrew was fussy but quieted down when he was being held. He said his feet were bandaged from burns he suffered at work and that he had ingested several of the potent painkillers throughout the day.

While holding Andrew in his arm, Mr. Nowak said, he tripped either because of the bandages or from the drug's effects or both. As he fell forward, he said, all his weight came down on top of the baby he was holding.

"I tried catching myself," Mr. Nowak said. "I went down on top of Andrew."

That's not the way the medical examiner sees it. Dr. Diane Scala-Barnett of the Lucas County Coroner's Office testified in January that the baby's injuries were so severe they could only be inflicted by sustained pressure.

Among the injuries Andrew suffered were 15 broken ribs and a broken femur that Dr. Scala-Barnett described as a spiral fracture that could only have occurred by twisting. She testified at the time that the injuries were the worst she'd ever seen in an infant.

Mr. Nowak never testified in court, so his explanation that he accidentally fell on the baby was never made public. Reached at her office last week, Dr. Scala-Barnett said in a telephone interview that she is certain the injuries were not caused by Mr. Nowak falling on top of the baby.

"No, no, absolutely not," she said emphatically. "You would not get those kinds of injuries from that story. It doesn't make any sense. This is child abuse. That's all it is."

Monroe County Prosecutor William P. Nichols also dismissed Mr. Nowak's version. Mr. Nichols said he is skeptical of what Mr. Nowak said, especially a year after the death and after he already had pleaded to second-degree murder.

"He can say anything he wants," Mr. Nichols said. "He can say he was in California at the time if he wants."

Additionally, Monroe County sheriff's Detective Dave Davison testified in the January hearing that Mr. Nowak told him during an interview that he became frustrated and squeezed the infant.

Asked why he would not take his case to trial, Mr. Nowak said he wouldn't be able to afford it. Besides, he said, he is guilty of caring for his infant son while under the influence of painkillers.

"No matter what, I'm going to prison," he said. "I was told by my attorney to keep my mouth shut."

Mr. Nowak said even though it was an accident, a jury most likely would find him guilty of being responsible for Andrew's death. He wanted to hire a new attorney (he was issued a free court-appointed attorney) to go to trial but figured it would cost tens of thousands of dollars he doesn't have and he would end up in prison anyway. So he decided to enter a plea.

Mr. Nowak's court-appointed attorney, Russell A. Smith of Temperance, declined comment, citing attorney-client confidentiality.

Born in Adrian and raised in Blissfield, Mr. Nowak came to Dundee in 2003 when he moved in with his girlfriend, Misty Ripple, Andrew's mother, after they met at an Arby's restaurant in Milan and began dating.

Mr. Nowak has a 10-year-old daughter, Salena, from a previous marriage. Salena is living with her grandmother.

"She's doing really good," Mr. Nowak said. "We used to spend a lot of time together."

On Sept. 1, 2005, Andrew was born. Mr. Nowak said it was the happiest day of his life.

"I got to deliver him," he said tearfully. "It was something I'll never forget. I was the happiest father you could be."

He worked the afternoon shift at Bi Mac in Milan, a chemical company. It was there that he said he burned his feet while bagging and mixing chemicals and that was why he was taking the painkillers.

A self-proclaimed night person, Mr. Nowak said on the day of Andrew's death he was cleaning up the apartment in anticipation of his father's visit for a Thanksgiving get-together. About 2:30 a.m., Misty went to sleep while he stayed up. Mr. Nowak said the baby was fussy from an upper respiratory infection but quieted down when held.

"I tried to get him to back to sleep but he kept crying," Mr. Nowak said. "I held him in my right arm. He was content."

He said he held Andrew in his arm with the baby's feet up against Mr. Nowak's chest. He said when he fell, Andrew let out a screech. Mr. Nowak said he put the baby on the couch but did not call for help immediately.

"He was still breathing," he said. "But I knew something happened. I was scared. I didn't know what to do."

Mr. Nowak said less than an hour later he noticed the baby's lips were blue.

"That's when I started screaming," he said.

Mr. Nowak said he should have done something immediately after the fall. He said it was a selfish act because he was afraid of getting in trouble because he was on painkillers. And he didn't say anything to the police because he felt they wouldn't believe him.

Although he denies the experts' claims of squeezing, Mr. Nowak said he understands he should have handled the situation much differently.

"In my eyes, I should go to prison," he said. "I should have called 911. Maybe if I would have called sooner he still would be alive."

Now he's preparing for a long stay in prison. He said his family has supported him and that has helped. Mr. Nowak said despite the testimony and expert analysis that says otherwise, he did not squeeze his son to death in a fit of frustration.

"It was an accident, but I'm taking full responsibility," Mr. Nowak said. "There's so much I wish I could take back."

On Thursday afternoon Monroe County Circuit Judge Joseph A. Costello Jr. will decide how many years Mr. Nowak should spend in prison.

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Mother Charged With Child Abuse, Assault

By Michael Rosenfield

Web produced by Sarah Morgan

October 24, 2006



30-year-old Lanita Weeden

An Oakland County mother faced a judge, Tuesday, accused of whipping, clubbing and choking her young son.

Alleged abuse occurred at the family's home in Orion Township. 30-year-old Lanita Weeden allegedly attacked her son with an extension cord, a pool cue and a tree branch. The 11-year-old boy was able to escape and ran to a Meijer store where he called police.

Weeden was charged with abusing and assaulting her son. Her record includes a long list of driving violations.

The magistrate ordered Weeden to have no contact with her son. She was held on a \$10,000 cash bond, which Weeden argued against in order to save her job.

If convicted she could spend the next six years in prison. On Tuesday it was unclear who was taking care of her three children.

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The Detroit News

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

Oakland Briefs

Orion Township

Local woman accused of beating her son, 11

A 30-year-old Orion Township woman will be arraigned on child abuse and felonious assault charges at 9 a.m. today in the 52-3 District Court. She is accused of whipping her 11-year-old son with a switch and extension cord, clubbing him in the head with a pool cue and choking him in their home on Brown Street. The boy fled the home and reported the incident to police in Auburn Hills, who had him transported to St. Joseph Hospital for treatment of his injuries. The case then was turned over to the Oakland County Sheriff's Office for investigation.

Church Worker Accused Of Molesting Child

October 23, 2006

HOLLAND -- A church worker in Holland is accused of sexual assault after an alleged incident with a child at a food giveaway.

Leaders at Calvary Reformed Church pride themselves on outreach by helping the less fortunate. "Trying to provide job training and educational opportunities," said Pastor Blaine Newhouse.

Part of their staff is a 50-year old man from Holland who teaches computer classes at the church as a part-time job. Last Thursday, he was helping out with the church's monthly food giveaway.

Newhouse said while two parents stood in line, the suspect disappeared with their 9-year-old daughter. "He and this person were in a place where others were not aware that they were together," said Newhouse. "And that's when these accusations were leveled against this person."

Police interviewed the suspect, witnesses, and the girl. Then Friday, the man was taken into custody on charges of first degree criminal sexual conduct. "There are certain protocols to follow when interviewing children so they understand truthfulness," said Capt. Rick Walters. "And so you're not planting ideas in their mind as you go through that process."

The church has an abuse prevention policy for employees. Part of that includes background checks and supervision. "Whenever we have a ministry or anything going on at church there needs to be two adults so that we don't ever set someone up to be violated in any way," said Newhouse.

Investigators say the suspect has no prior convictions. He posted bond over the weekend and was released. His name will be released once he's formally charged. That will happen Tuesday, October 31st.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Pedophiles troll MySpace

Washtenaw detective finds 100% of his cases have accounts

Monday, October 23, 2006

BY AMALIE NASH

News Staff Reporter

It's a parent's nightmare: Sex offenders prowling through MySpace, looking for young victims.

For Washtenaw County Sheriff's Detective Kevin Parviz, it's a disturbing reality in his work.

In the 12 cyber pedophile cases he has investigated this year, Parviz says, every single suspect has had an account on MySpace, a social networking site popular with teenagers and young adults. What's more, nine of those cases involved men serving probation for a sex offense conviction with a victim under 13 years old.

Parviz, the county's only full-time cyber detective, had an idea at the beginning of the year: Instead of just posing as a teenager online and waiting for solicitations, why not check up on registered sex offenders who are on probation?

The results have been successful, and perhaps shocking to some.

In nine surprise visits to the offenders' homes, Parviz and probation officers found the men were violating the terms of their probation. In five of the homes, police found child pornography, in several homes they found the men had computers though they had been forbidden to own one, and in other cases the detectives found the men were communicating with underage teenagers.

"In the eyes of a police officer, I'm not surprised one bit because I've never come across a pedophile who just gave it up," Parviz said. "I think this is very important and more attention should be paid to it. These are people who were usually charged with higher offenses and plea bargained to second-degree criminal sexual conduct, then served some jail time and are out on probation."

Parviz can't say for sure whether all of the men he investigated were using their MySpace accounts to communicate with teenagers. But since probation conditions for sex offenders - especially those who commit crimes using a computer - often forbid the person from owning a computer while they are on probation, it's still a violation.

MySpace, with its more than 100 million users, made headlines again last Wednesday after a technology reporter for Wired Magazine uncovered hundreds of convicted sex offenders on the site with a computer code that he wrote, leading to one man's arrest. The reporter identified 744 sex offenders with profiles on the site.

Last month, Ann Arbor police investigated a reported relationship between a then-15-year-old girl and 37-year-old man she met on MySpace. Police received a tip shortly after they began communicating, but both denied anything sexual occurred, Detective Sgt. Jeff Connelly said.

"I think it was headed in that direction, but it was stopped," Connelly said.

In Parviz's 12 cases, he sought charges that included probation violations, possession of child pornography and using a computer to commit a crime. Three men have been convicted. Two committed suicide. And the rest are pending.

Leo Lelonde, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections, said probation and parole officers across the state have employed similar tactics to keep track of offenders. He said agents have a tool that they can attach to computers that will detect whether the computer may contain pornography or child

pornography. They then seize the computer for a forensic analysis.

Figures were not available on the number of offenders on probation for sex offenses in Washtenaw County.

"Probationers always know that their officers can make unannounced visits, so they should be on the straight and narrow," Lelonde said.

That lesson was apparently lost on one 24-year-old probationer. He was out of jail for two weeks when he got his Internet cable line installed, Parviz said. When the detective and probation agent visited three days later, they discovered that he had been online nearly nonstop, accosting teenage girls, Parviz said. He's now in prison, serving a two- to 15-year sentence.

"He was to the point where he was saying things like, 'I want to know you,' and I believe we stopped him before he was able to do anything," Parviz said.

Another man claimed to be 25 on his MySpace account - but was actually 51, Parviz said. He had posted a photo of a man who appeared to be about 25.

But MySpace isn't the only place where online solicitations occur.

Parviz said one mother called police after posting a child's leotard on eBay and receiving e-mails from a man asking for nude pictures of the 8-year-old daughter.

On one hard drive that a suspect tried to erase, Parviz recovered an e-mail from a 16-year-old girl telling a man she couldn't meet him because she didn't have a driver's license. The detective then e-mailed the teen asking for her mother to call him and learned the girl met the man - who was much older than he claimed - through a gaming Web site. He said the mother didn't know about the e-mails.

When Parviz speaks to neighborhood groups or others, that's his No. 1 lesson: Know what your children are doing and who they're talking to online.

"It's no excuse for parents to say they don't know computers. They have to know," Parviz said. "Pedophiles take advantage of parents not knowing who their children are communicating with. It used to be that parents taught their kids how to use different tools, and now it's the other way around. They need to get educated."

Parviz works from an office in the sheriff's Ypsilanti Township substation, where two FREDs (Forensic Recover Evidence Devices) keep busy analyzing computer data. When computers are seized, he makes a mirror copy of the hard drive, then uses that copy to search for data.

Although he doesn't spend much time online waiting to be solicited, Parviz does have several MySpace accounts where he poses as a teenager - even using his own childhood photos. But the cases generated from probationer house calls and the identity theft and fraud cases he investigates take the bulk of his time.

Parviz admitted the pedophile cases can get to him.

"It's sickening, but I try not to put my personal feelings into it," Parviz said. "You have to really change your mindset. I interviewed this one man for three hours, and every minute of it I wanted to punch his lights out, but he thought I was his best friend."

Because the cyber pedophile cases often cross jurisdictional boundaries, Parviz works closely with detectives across the area - and nation. He said he believes the volume of cases won't decrease until authorities are able to better investigate them and parents better monitor their children.

"When a kid is molested or something happens, they carry that with them for life," Parviz said. "There needs to be zero tolerance."

Amalie Nash can be reached at anash@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6832.

Drug bust nabs six

Sheriff-city police combine on investigation

[Jan Bellamy](#), Staff Writer
517.437.6016

Three men and three women are in jail on drug charges following a lengthy investigation involving both the Hillsdale County Sheriff's and the Hillsdale Police departments.

Advertisement

The six, ages 24 to 48, are alleged to be involved in the purchase, possession and distribution of both prescription and illegal drugs in Hillsdale County.

"We continue the investigation, and we want to keep people on their toes," said Hillsdale Public Safety Director Christopher Gutowski.

"I can say it was more than two days and less than two months, but I don't want to give away more than that."

According to Undersheriff Jeremiah J. Hodshire, the six adults were arrested in a drug raid around 9:30 p.m. Friday night. In addition to the six adults, officers also found six children in the home at 90-2 Barr St. The children were turned over to the Department of Human Services.

Gutowski explained the location reflects a No. 2 unit in one of the buildings at the site, which also includes a mobile home. According to the arrest record, five of the six adults lived at the location of the raid.

"A detailed search of the residence revealed a substantial amount of illegal drugs and prescription drugs," according to Hodshire. "Furthermore, a large amount of cash used in the operation was seized from the residence."

Deputies and city police officers conducted extensive surveillance and deployed other investigative techniques, which led to the arrests, and the investigation continues, according to Hodshire.

The charges specific to each individual are revealed in the arrest record:

n Michael R. Pepper, 24, Hillsdale, conspiracy to deliver cocaine. A \$50,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

n Angel R. Denton, 26, Hillsdale, possession of oxycontin with intent to deliver and possession of cocaine with intent to deliver. A \$60,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

n Richard M. Bond, 24, Hillsdale, possession of cocaine with intent to deliver, possession of vicodin with intent to deliver, and possession of oxycontin with intent to deliver. A \$150,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

n James K. Hudson, 48, Hillsdale, possession of cocaine, possession of marijuana and possession of vicodin. A \$60,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

n Kimberly A. Ritchie, 26, Hillsdale, possession of cocaine with intent to deliver. A \$50,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

n Candy S. Sullivan, 28, Hillsdale, conspiracy to deliver cocaine. A \$50,000 bond with 10 percent allowed was not posted.

As of Monday morning, all six remained lodged in the county jail, with arraignment anticipated at 1 p.m. in Hillsdale County District Court, according to Capt. Carl Albright, Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department. Hodshire said the arraignments would be by video from the jail.

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October 24, 2006

Young killer set to begin new life

Convicted of killing a man when he was 11, Nathaniel Abraham, now 20, prepares for his release in January.

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- Nathaniel Abraham, who was convicted of a murder he committed when he was 11, says he is ready to start a new life once he is released from state custody on his 21st birthday in January.

Abraham spoke to reporters on Monday for the first time since his 1999 conviction for second-degree murder.

Abraham, now 20 and living in a Bay City halfway house, was 11 when he fired a sniper shot from a hilltop in Pontiac, killing 18-year-old Ronnie Greene. In 1999, Abraham was the youngest person convicted of murder in the United States.

"I feel real good. It's just the beginning for me. Take it one step at a time," Abraham said in a hallway inside Oakland Circuit Court, where a progress hearing was held.

Forgoing an adult sentence that could have landed Abraham a lengthy prison term, Judge Eugene A. Moore punished him under a law that allows the state to hold juveniles until their 21st birthday.

Abraham, who turns 21 on Jan. 19, spent nearly a decade at the W.J. Maxey Training Center in Whitmore Lake, where he lived in a lockdown facility and underwent intensive individual and group therapy. He was diagnosed with a personality disorder and developed a reputation for rebuffing authority figures.

Eventually he earned his GED and graduated from the Maxey program, which allowed him to be released to a minimum-security facility last May.

On July 14, he was moved to Parmenter Halfway House in Bay City, where employees have worked to prepare him for life on the outside, including how to keep a job and balance a bank account.

On Monday, Abraham walked through the door of Moore's courtroom without deputies, without handcuffs or shackles. His team of attorneys, social workers, mentors and therapists surrounded him as his mother and grandfather sat nearby.

He told the judge that predictions by naysayers that he would fail have kept him going.

"People predicted me to make mistakes, saying I was locked up too long," Abraham said. "Every day I woke up I had that in front of me. I used it as motivation. I take care of business. That is what people need to look at."

Chris Tetloff, a manager at Parmenter, told Moore that Abraham is employed at a local retail store, enrolled in community college and remains drug and alcohol free.

He has taken and passed the written test for a driver's license and is preparing to take driving lessons.

Tetloff said Abraham violated a few house rules -- such as using a cell phone, taking cleaning supplies off property for a friend to use and came in past curfew one evening -- but was spoken to and punished in one case.

Jack Haynes, an independent psychologist appointed by the court, said he was impressed with Abraham's maturity level, "particularly given the limitation of being raised in an institution. He is looking forward."

Assistant Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley, who has spent the last year telling Moore that Abraham is still not rehabilitated and should stay locked up until he is 21, said Monday everything possible has been done for him, and it is his turn now to make the right choices.

Carley recently paid a visit to Abraham at Parmenter, reminding him that the media attention is not likely to go away soon.

Moore ended the hearing by telling Abraham, who was so small when he first appeared before the judge that his feet did not touch the ground when he sat in a chair, that everyone on his case has the same goal:

"To make sure you change and won't get in trouble again," Moore said.

You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or jchambers@detnews.com.

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Man Who Killed At 11 Says He's Motivated By Others' Expectations

POSTED: 12:33 pm EDT October 23, 2006

Nathaniel Abraham, who was 11 when he shot and killed a man, told a judge Monday that people's low expectations of him kept him motivated since he transferred to a halfway house.

"Since I've been out, what kept me focused and motivated is that people predicted me to make a mistake," said Abraham, who is scheduled to be freed from all state supervision when he turns 21 on Jan. 19. "Every day I woke up I just had that in front of me and I just use that as my motivation."

Officials from the Bay City halfway house where Abraham currently lives praised his progress at a hearing Monday before Oakland County Probate Judge Eugene Arthur Moore. His court-appointed guardian and a psychologist also said they were impressed by his maturity.

Moore set a final review hearing for Jan. 18.

Abraham was convicted of second-degree murder in the 1997 shooting death of Ronnie Lee Greene, 18, outside a convenience store in Pontiac. Though convicted as an adult, he was sentenced as a juvenile.

Abraham was transferred to the halfway house in July. He had spent years at W.J. Maxey Training School near Whitmore Lake. Since May, he had been at a medium-security camp near Prudenville.

The case sparked debate on the treatment of juveniles accused of violent crimes. He was the first young person charged with first-degree murder to be prosecuted under a 1997 Michigan law that allowed adult prosecutions of children of any age in serious felony cases.

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Kids, 12, 13, caught for local crime spree

, , 20

Two juveniles, ages 12 and 13, are suspects in a two-month crime spree in Georgetown Township.

A report from Ottawa County Sheriff's Department Lt. Mark Bennett stated the two are suspected of causing several thousand dollars of damage and loss in more than 10 incidents of malicious destruction of property, breaking and entering, larceny, larceny from vehicles, and damage to vehicles. The incidents took place over a two-month period between the middle of August and the middle of October.

"Information surfaced when a deputy was investigating a report of a runaway, in which the youths were involved," Bennett said. "The suspects were found near the location of a crime."

Two of the incidents in which the youths are suspects include malicious destruction of property at Wallinwood Springs Golf Course on Aug. 30, and breaking and entering at Strikers recreation center on Sept. 19.

Both suspects were released to their parents and will be charged with several felonies in Juvenile Court, according to police.

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THE DAILY Reporter

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Do we want the state to profit from parents of troubled children?

[Print Page](#)

To the Editor:

Please request that the Michigan state house and senate have hearings on the actions of the SCAO. The Michigan Supreme Court has entered Administrative Order No. 2006-5 which replaces the "Schedule of Payments" policy used in juvenile cases where the juvenile is placed outside their home after a dis-positional hearing. In its place the court has adopted in part the Child Support Formula Schedules as the basis of parental reimbursement to the state for the juveniles placement.

At www.courts.michi-gan.gov/scao/features/Mailings/2006/10-12-06/ReimbursementGuidelinesMemo.pdf, this new order has created a communistic system of treating people differently according to their ability to pay. Please stop this new practice and only allow the state to charge parents for the actual costs, otherwise there will be an incentive for the state to send children to the juvenile home for longer stays for lesser crimes and remove children from their homes. They do not say how they are going to order payments, are they going to order non-custodial parents to pay the state even though the custodial parent had the super majority of parenting time?

Statistics say that children do better when both parents are equally in the lives of their children but this new rule makes the state want to keep fathers out of their children's lives so that they can have more children in the system to charge support for. Do we really want there to be an incentive for the state to profit from middle- to high-income parents of troubled children?

Darrick Scott-Farnsworth

Augusta

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Arrington pleads not guilty to charge

U-M receiver faces misdemeanor count after allegedly fighting with girlfriend

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

BY ART AISNER

News Staff Reporter

A University of Michigan wide receiver is facing a domestic violence charge after an altercation with his girlfriend, police said.

Adrian Arrington, 20, was arraigned on one count of misdemeanor domestic violence Wednesday in Washtenaw County District Court, records show. Authorities issued a warrant for his arrest on Oct. 14, a day after his girlfriend, a 20-year-old Eastern Michigan University student, reported the Michigan redshirt sophomore took her car without permission.

Ypsilanti Police responded to the woman's home in the 200 block of north Normal Street just before 3 a.m. on Oct. 13. She told officers Arrington took the keys from her during an argument, pulled her from the vehicle and drove it back to Ann Arbor, said Chief Matt Harshberger.

The woman said Arrington was drinking and began fighting with her as she drove them from Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti. When they arrived at her house, he said he wanted to go back to Ann Arbor and demanded the keys, Harshberger said. When she refused, Arrington got out of car, reached through the driver's-side window to grab them and forced them from her hand. He then pulled her out of the car by her wrists and drove away, Harshberger said.

The victim had small scratches on her hands and did not request medical treatment, according to reports.

"I was first informed that there was an issue mid-week," Michigan coach Lloyd Carr said through sports information director Bruce Madej. "This is a new issue and if he was drinking, I have to find that out, and it is a team issue. And we handle team issues internally."

Carr first addressed the incident briefly after last Saturday's game against Iowa, in which Arrington started and caught a career-high eight passes. Arrington is second on the team this season with 25 receptions.

"I'm not going to discuss it except to say that I take any allegation of this type very seriously," Carr said. "But I do not think the allegation is supported by the facts."

Arrington, with his attorney, Chris Easthope, turned himself in to authorities on the day he was arraigned.

A not guilty plea was entered on his behalf, and he was released on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond with conditions, including no contact with the victim, officials said. He is allowed to leave the state to participate in Michigan functions, including games, said Easthope.

"Mr. Arrington didn't assault this woman, and she is dumbfounded how this even became a domestic violence charge," Easthope said. A pre-trial hearing is scheduled for Nov. 1.

News Sports reporter John Heuser contributed to this report.

Art Aisner can be reached at aaisner@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6823.



Hearing postponed on torture charge

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

By Theresa D. McClellan

The Grand Rapids Press

ROCKFORD -- A hearing for Lester Wakefield Jr., charged with torturing a former girlfriend, was adjourned for one week after his father retained a lawyer to replace his son's court-appointed attorney.

Wakefield Jr., 43, allegedly beat, choked and held the victim at knife point for two days. He is charged as a fourth-offense habitual offender.

When the victim entered the District Court, her friends tried to shield her from Wakefield as he twisted and turned in his seat trying to catch her attention. The court's victim advocate asked sheriff's deputies to keep him in his seat.

After the judge and prosecutors agreed to adjourn for a week, Wakefield called the charge "a big misunderstanding."

Asking visiting Judge Ann Hannon to reduce his \$1 million bond, he said, appearing teary-eyed, "I have a small business, and this (felony charges) was just a big misunderstanding."

The felony charges against him are "much bigger" than a misunderstanding, the judge responded.

The victim told police she dated Wakefield, also known as Bruce Rohn, for three years. She told police he tortured her Oct. 6 through Oct. 8 at knifepoint in her Oakfield Township home.

She told police Wakefield urinated on her, ripped off her clothing, choked her and struck her several times on the head. Police recovered blood-soaked paper towels from the victim's car and home.

Responding to Wakefield's request, the judge continued the bond and reminded him of no-contact rules. Hannon told Wakefield to tell his friends to stay away from the victim as well.

Wakefield was returned to jail.

Send e-mail to the author: tmcclellan@grpress.com

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Child Support Division uses Internet to find violators

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Allegan County residents have a new way of paying and receiving child support online.

The Department of Human Service Office of Child Support, in coordination with the Friend of the Court, in Allegan, Gratiot, Ionia, Kalamazoo and Saginaw counties, have begun disbursing child support through a debit card system.

Public Act 548 of 2004 requires that all child support payments be electronically disbursed through direct deposit into a savings or checking account, or to a debit card, unless recipients meet hardship exception criteria.

Hardship exemptions may be granted for persons with a mental or physical disability, or a language or literacy barrier. Exemptions can be granted to persons with payments that are not reoccurring, or that are not expected to continue in a 12-month period. An exemption could also be granted to persons that have a home and work address that are more than 30 miles away from an ATM or financial institution.

The program is being implemented through a 2006 "rollout" process. Seventy-three counties have already transitioned to electronic disbursement.

Three notices will be sent to clients, asking them to return the request for direct deposit. The notice will inform them that if they do not return the request they will receive a debit card. Within two weeks after the first notice, a second notice will be sent to persons who have not chosen direct deposit, again requesting that they choose direct deposit or receive the debit card. Around two weeks after the second notice, a third notice will be sent to those who have not chosen direct deposit. After the third notice, the notice recipients will receive debit cards.

Allegan County customers received the first notice on Sept. 20, the second notice on Oct. 3, and the third notice on Oct. 18. Debit cards were mailed out Oct. 20.

Electronic disbursement provides immediate access to funds, eliminates mail delays and stolen checks, and eliminates check-cashing fees. Electronic disbursement also helps avoid delays if a customer moves, and has not updated their address, prevents money being held by the state if a customer in the process of updating their address, and makes more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The new system also reduces the expenditures made by the state, while attempting to track down customers.

Before the new law was implemented, around 30 percent of child support recipients in Michigan had their payments directly deposited into their savings or checking accounts. Customers currently participating in direct deposit are not required to switch to the debit card.

The new VISA debit cards, which will be issued at no cost to customers, can be used like any other bank or credit union debit card at millions of locations that accept VISA debit cards, without fees.

Customers may also get cash back with purchases from any one of 29,000 Interlink merchants in Michigan, without fees. Customers choosing to access debit card funds using an automatic teller machine (ATM) will be subject to ATM fees.

Electronic payment notices will be sent to customers in Barry, Calhoun, Jackson, and Monroe in November, and in Wayne County in December.

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Source: Michigan State Housing Development Authority

First Annual Michigan Homeless Summit Convenes Today

Tuesday October 24, 8:59 am ET

LANSING, Mich., Oct. 24 /PRNewswire/ -- Over 650 people from across the state are gathering for the first annual Michigan Homeless Summit, a two-day event at the Lansing Center. Included among the special guests at the Summit are Philip F. Mangano, Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and several other national and regional leaders. The first day of the Michigan Homeless Summit will include a ceremonial presentation and celebration of the completion of 60 individual community plans to end homelessness. Acknowledging the reality that homelessness is a problem in both urban and rural settings, the plans represent a community collaboration that will cover all of the 83 counties in Michigan.

Also being presented on the opening day of the Summit is the Baseline Data Report on the state of Michigan's Homeless. The report is the product of a two-year process of establishing the technology and training to tabulate the homeless through points of entry in hundreds of locations across the state. The significance of this first report, which is just six months worth of statewide data, is the ability to understand who is homeless, what their needs are, and how many are located in what communities.

In the past, quantifying the homeless and their needs has been an inexact science -- making it very difficult to translate the needs of the homeless into accurate allocations of resources and support. Having the tools to create good data is an important part of the statewide Campaigns to End Homelessness. Local groups will have the ability to instantly access up-to- date data on the homeless in their community through this technology known as the Michigan State Homeless Management Information System.

While the local groups that have authored their own plans to end homelessness will concentrate on the specific needs in their own communities, there has been an extraordinary effort among several state agencies to collaborate and share resources in new ways to benefit the homeless in Michigan. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Department of Corrections will all be pledging their continued cooperation and collaboration. There are several new initiatives that cut across state agencies that are already in place; Summit attendees will take a reference sheet home that describes all of the initiatives and provides easy access for more information.

On the second day of the Summit, the attending community groups will spend their time gathering together in regional discussions to promote further collaboration and efficient use of resources. The groups will be receiving important information on implementation strategies and a toolkit for launching their own Campaign to End Homelessness in their community during Homeless Awareness Week, November 10-19.

For more information on Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness, and access to spokespersons from the various state agencies, contact Mary Lou Keenon, Public Information Officer for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, 517-373-0011.

Source: Michigan State Housing Development Authority

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Group tackling homelessness

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

By Susan J. Demas

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Crazy.

That's how state Sen. Mark Schauer sums up the typical reaction to Jackson County's new plan to end homelessness in 10 years.

But Schauer, D-Battle Creek, and members of 13 local organizations say the county has no choice but try to get the about 350 homeless off the street.

"There is a cost to each of us when people fall through the cracks," said Schauer, who is serving as the coalition's community champion.

Schauer is being challenged Nov. 7 by Elizabeth Fulton, R-Battle Creek.

The plan is part of a statewide effort to tackle homelessness in all 83 counties.

The coalition will address problems in housing, health care, employment and income, and discharge for prisoners, hospital patients and foster children.

How much it will take to solve the problem in Jackson is unknown, said Tanda Reynolds, executive director of the Department of Human Services. The county is hoping to qualify for federal and Michigan State Housing Development Authority funds.

"This will save our community money in terms of emergency services," Reynolds said.

There has been a "fragmented" approach to homelessness in Jackson, Reynolds said. Now groups such as LifeWays, Florence Crittenton Services, Jackson Housing Commission, Center for Family Health and United Way of Jackson County are moving forward together.

The first goal is to establish a central authority, led by a homelessness coordinator. The next step is to establish a continuum of care to move people from homelessness to long-term ownership. Steps along the way may include public, assisted and rental housing. The lack of affordable housing is one roadblock for people struggling to make ends meet. Domestic violence is another; 92 percent of homeless women have been victims, the task force reports.

At risk are not just the 350 homeless, Reynolds said, but those living paycheck to paycheck. Jackson County has about 20,000 people in poverty. That's the same number of residents without health insurance, the Department of Community Health reports.

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MORNING SUN

Long-lost siblings rediscover their bond

By SUSAN J. FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

Standing outside a temporary employment agency in Mt. Pleasant recently, Jerry Marks looked at the stranger standing near him and got an eerie feeling.

"I looked at her and I said, 'You know what? You look just like my biological sister, who I've been looking for'" Marks said.

Intrigued, Tressa Norris, 23, of Mt. Pleasant began talking to Marks, 22, of Remus, outside Labor Ready on South Mission Road.

Reciting names of relatives, the two simultaneously said "Joyce Matthews."

It was then that Marks and Norris, adopted at ages 11 and 13 after being removed, along with their other siblings, from Joyce Ann Heck Matthews' home in Fremont years earlier, realized they were siblings.

The last time Norris and Marks saw each other was at a supervised visitation when the two were pre-teens and living in separate foster homes.

Still, Marks said, looking at Norris that fateful day at the temp agency, he could see the sister he remembered from his childhood.

Norris was also stunned by the discovery.

"We didn't know whether to hug each other, kiss each other or cry," she said.

Since then, the two have worked together on temporary jobs, doing food service at Central Michigan University, Norris said.

Growing up in Muskegon, Norris thought of Marks and her other siblings, Tracy, April, Jason Lee, Rachel, Michael and Bruce.

Marks, who lived in Reed City and Kalamazoo after his adoption, eventually settled in Remus, where he lives with his wife, Tamara Marks, and their 10-month-old daughter, Tatum Ann.

The children had been in and out of their biological mother's home as children and were finally separated when their birth mother chose drugs, alcohol and prostitution over her children, Norris said.

Marks and Norris had been searching for each other, on and off, for years.

Both were adopted in White Cloud, but neither could get much information from the Michigan Department of Human Services, formerly the Family Independence Agency, Norris said.

Still, Norris and Marks searched the Internet and made phone calls in their attempts to locate each other, but it was a source of frustration because neither got very far.

"I wasn't having any luck," Norris said. "So I just gave up."

Now that the two have been reunited, the talk to each other just about every day, sometimes

about their desire to find their younger sister, Rachel.

They know that Rachel's last name was Salazar, and they know she is in the Traverse City area, Marks said.

They don't know what her adoptive last name is, however.

Norris is also still searching for her other biological siblings, whom she has not seen since she was adopted.

"We can't find where they are," Norris said. "We're probably going to have to go to Muskegon or White Cloud, where we got adopted, and go from there."

Click here to return to story:

http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/102406/loc_siblings001.shtml



Muskegon Chronicle

Preschool helps high-schoolers learn about kids

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

By Lynn Moore

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Little McKenzie Covington happily played with Play-Doh at her preschool recently, oblivious to the fact she was being watched from behind one-way glass.

On the other side of the glass, high school students carefully watched McKenzie and her little playmates, making notes on their movements and behaviors.

"She's a busy-body," said Colisha Olivares, a first-year student in the early childhood development program at the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center.

"She does a lot of things."

Olivares and about 15 other first-year students intently watched as second-year students ran the preschool at the CTC, helping the little ones with finger paints, serving up a snack of animal crackers and juice and singing songs.

The preschoolers and the high-schoolers learn from each other in the unique setup that has the teenagers running the Bright Beginnings Preschool two days a week.

"I want to learn more about children because I want to be a pediatrician," said first-year student Michelle Easter, a senior at Muskegon Heights High School.

Among the childhood development students who spend mornings or afternoons at the CTC on Harvey Street are high-schoolers interested in becoming teachers, social workers or child-care workers -- or who just want to be better babysitters and parents.

Though the CTC's early childhood development program started a year ago, the preschool didn't open until the end of last school year. That's because the CTC students needed to study and learn about children before they could actually operate the preschool, instructors say.

The bright new preschool room is connected to a regular high school classroom at the CTC by the bank of one-way windows. On the preschool side are the young children and second-year students; on the classroom side are first-year students who watch and monitor the activity in the preschool.

First-year students observe individual pre-schoolers, writing notes about their actions and then discussing them with each other. They look for changes in behavior and discuss possible reasons. They watch for development delays and talk about possible lessons that would help.

"It's not sitting reading a book and doing a worksheet," said Angelyn Leavers, instructor in the early childhood development program.

In addition to studying child development, the students, mindful that they are role models for little learners, practice penmanship, are careful to use proper grammar, practice reading children's books to each other and create child-friendly posters -- the kind one might find hanging in an elementary classroom or preschool.

Second-year students also develop programming for the little learners.

The early childhood development course is one of 16 classes offered at the CTC facility on Harvey Street near Stebbins Road that opened last year. The facility, funded by a one-mill tax levy approved by voters in 2002, features state-of-the-art learning labs that cross the boundary from classroom into bonafide business.

For example, the restaurant, catering and culinary management program operates a restaurant at the CTC called the Harvey Street Cafe. The marketing/e-commerce program runs an on-site convenience store, while the horticulture and natural resources program operates a flower shop.

And the early childhood development program operates the two-day-a-week Bright Beginnings Preschool, which charges a nominal fee of \$5 per week. Parents can choose between two-hour morning or afternoon sessions.

Calvin Carter of North Muskegon learned of the preschool when his older son attended the CTC when he was in high school. Now Carter sends his 2-year-old, DeAvion Carter-Billings, to the preschool.

"It gives him a chance to interact with the other kids," said Carter, a stay-at-home dad. "He's a little more advanced for his age. It gets him away from me for a bit."

Carter said he's happy with the attention the students give his active son, and understands the learning experience is important for them, too.

"It gives them a chance to handle little children," Carter said. "If they want to be a teacher, they need this kind of experience."

The carefully planned preschool facility is child-friendly, from the tiny toilet and sink in the bathroom to cubby holes for each pint-sized student in the foyer, to the slide, teeter-totter and other play equipment in the outside play area. The bright and roomy preschool has its own outside entrance with a circular drive drop-off area.

"I learn more hands-on, but some days you want to pull your hair out," said Whitehall senior Carrie Grimm, a second-year CTC student.

Grimm hopes to eventually open her own child-care facility.

"You learn a lot about yourself," she said of the child development program. "You look back on how you were raised and how you handle stuff and why you react in certain ways."

Leavers said the child development program, which can handle 24 students in each of the morning and afternoon sessions, has proven to be popular, and even had a waiting list at the beginning of the year. The program closely follows the CTC's mission of preparing students for careers, she said.

"A lot of their grade is employability skills -- their cooperation and ability to get along with others," Leavers said.

Students said they enjoy getting to know others from different schools. And of course they enjoy the active, happy preschoolers.

"It's a great way to end the day," said Brittney Velez, a Fruitport senior who attends the afternoon child development program. "Even if I'm having a bad day, it puts me in a good mood."

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Kent County, state reach lease agreement on new DHS site

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By TIM DISSELKOEN

A long time ago, at a meeting far, far away

Okay, the meetings began two years ago, in Lansing, but to those involved it seems like an epic saga and it appears it is now coming to a close as the county, state, and the city of Grand Rapids are all on the same page and poised to build a new Kent County Department of Human Services (DHS) facility at Franklin Street and Jefferson Avenue.

"A long time ago we agreed on the site," said State Rep. Jerry Kooiman. "It's been a long process of negotiations and I'm pleased to have gotten it done."

Kooiman, who represents the area where the facility will be built, had a goal to settle the issue before leaving office. The state is expected to take final action by the end of the year, in Kooiman's last days in office due to term limits.

Talks go back 20 years. The county had gotten close before about eight years ago but it never materialized for reasons not fully known, according to Kent County Administrator Daryl Delabbio. With that in mind, he's still a bit anxious until all approvals are in.

"It's closer now than we've ever been before," Delabbio said. "We've come close before. We're just hoping the state signs off on it and funds it. Once the state finally acts on it, then I'll breathe a sigh of relief."

The Kent County Board of Commissioners is expected to approve a proposed lease agreement Thursday, setting the wheels in motion, Delabbio said. After that, the joint capital outlay committee and administrative committee must approve of the deal at the state level, Kooiman said. Hopefully those will be formalities.

If all is approved, the county would issue bonds to construct a \$27 million facility at the site of the current Sheldon Complex and a neighboring building. Once completed in 2009, it would house a Kent County Health Department walk-in clinic, the state's department of human services, as well as a new tenant from Cascade Township, the Area Community Services Employment and Training Council (ASCET).

The current DHS building, just down the street, is housed in a building that is cramped, in decline, and has been for years, according to county officials. So Kooiman helped arrange a meeting at the site among officials from the DHS locally and from Lansing, the county board, and the state's Department of Management and Budget who deal in land sale and acquisition and handle all state lease agreements.

Over the past two years, the negotiations have been hammered out, and now the state seems ready to enter into a 20-year lease with two five-year renewal options. Once completed, the state will occupy 80 percent of the new building, Delabbio said.

"The hill has been climbed," Delabbio said. "This is sort of a win-win-win-win."

The county, state, and clients win with the new facility, and Grand Rapids wins because it retains all of the jobs and adds about 200 more with the addition of ASCET. And the location is perfect, county officials said, because 70 percent of its clients live within a three-mile radius of the site, a key factor in its selection.

Once completed, the 126,000-square-foot building will provide welfare and social services in addition to the walk-in clinic and job training all under one roof.

The county has purchased options on the properties and will acquire them once final approval from Lansing



Muskegon Chronicle

Bomb threats cost a day in school

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

By Lynn Moore and Clayton Hardiman

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITERS WITH LOCAL REPORTS

Multiple bomb threat calls were made to area school districts and agencies Monday, prompting Muskegon Heights Public Schools to cancel classes at all its buildings.

Three Muskegon Heights school buildings received threats as did three Muskegon Public Schools buildings as well as Senior Resources and the Department of Human Services, both of which are in Muskegon Heights.

No bombs were found.

Muskegon and Muskegon Heights law enforcement officials said this morning the investigation is continuing, and no arrests have been made. No threats were received this morning.

Calls began coming in around 8 a.m. Monday and continued until about 10:15 a.m., according to authorities.

In Muskegon Heights, classes were canceled because there weren't enough police and fire personnel to check the buildings and ensure the students' safety, said Muskegon Heights Public Schools Superintendent Dana Bryant.

Calls came in clusters, Bryant said.

"Once a building was cleared, they called to threaten again," he said.

At some Muskegon Heights school buildings, teachers used their own cars to make sure students reached home safely, Bryant said.

"Everyone stepped up," he said. "Some parents work, and some don't have transportation. We wanted to make sure no student was left behind."

Bomb threats were called into the Muskegon Heights Public Schools central administration building, Muskegon Heights Middle School and E. Grace Loftis Elementary School, targeting all the district's schools, beginning at about 8:05 a.m.

Moon Elementary was the first Muskegon Public School to receive a phoned-in threat just before 10 a.m., said Muskegon Superintendent Colin Armstrong.

Armstrong had alerted personnel in all Muskegon schools about the situation in the Heights, but Moon staff hadn't opened the e-mailed alert before getting the threat. The school was evacuated and searched, Armstrong said.

Muskegon's Bunker Middle School got the next call, and also evacuated for a search, though by then staff knew about the multiple threats being made. By the time Muskegon High School got a bomb threat just after 10 a.m., authorities were certain it was a hoax and kept students in the school while it was searched, Armstrong said.

"By then it was quite obvious it was someone sitting at home making a bunch of phone calls," Armstrong said. "You can't ignore it, but you have to respond in context."

He said he's hopeful that office secretaries in at least one Muskegon school were able to "capture" the phone number of the caller through a system that encodes the number for retrieval by the police.

Muskegon Fire Marshal Major Metcalf, who is leading the investigation into the Muskegon threats, said he is working with school officials to receive telephone information.

"We are making some progress, but slowly," Metcalf said.

He said he plans to meet with Muskegon Heights fire officials this afternoon to coordinate their investigations.

Armstrong said it is believed that the same male caller made all calls to Muskegon schools.

"It's a terrific waste of community resources," Armstrong said. "It theoretically puts people at risk, not just inside the school buildings. If you've got three fire units sitting outside three schools and something real happens it probably delays (public safety workers') response to the real thing.

"It's infuriating."

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How low can Meijer go? Try free

Stores are giving away antibiotics

BY GRETA GUEST
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Meijer's answer to Wal-Mart's \$4 generic prescription drug plan: Give them away.

Meijer Inc. of Walker, near Grand Rapids, announced that effective Monday, it would fill prescriptions for leading generic antibiotics for free.

"There is a climate right now... an expectancy of how the retail community can respond to this," Hank Meijer, chief executive and cochairman of the family owned supercenter chain said Monday at the Southfield store. "Wal-Mart took one approach. We like to think ours is better."

Last month **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.** announced it would test a \$4 generic drug program for 314 drugs in Florida; then it expanded the program to 14 more states, not including Michigan. **Target** said it will match Wal-Mart's program and **Kmart** offers a 90-day supply of certain generic drugs for a \$15 copay.

The program is Meijer's answer to helping families manage health care costs. Americans spent \$188.5 billion on prescription drugs in 2004, more than quadruple the \$40.3 billion spent in 1990, according to a June 2006 report from the **Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation**.

"There is no club to join. There is no insurance card. There is no fee. It is simply free," said Meijer President Mark Murray.

He said the giveaway will benefit 500,000 customers at the retailer's 176 stores. The program is limited to generic oral antibiotics that are prescribed most often for children. Customers will need prescriptions from their doctors. Murray said right now the company does not plan to give away other medicines.

Meijer pharmacies will give away at least one antibiotic from each major classification, such as Amoxicillin, Cephalexin, Ciprofloxacin, Penicillin VK, Ampicillin, Erythromycin and generic Bactrim. They represent more than 70% of the generic pediatric antibiotics the stores fill and are prescribed for illnesses like ear and sinus infections.

Richard Hastings of **Bernard Sands**, a retail industry research and trade credit consulting firm, said he thinks Meijer correctly identified the core of the generic business in its drug choices. But he isn't sure what the impact on sales will be.

"Because the markup on generics is pretty good, it doesn't cost the retailer much to mark them down and break even and keep their shoppers," Hastings said.

The company would not say what the program will cost. Some Meijer shoppers said they will take Meijer up on the offer.

"Being a person with no medical benefits, quite naturally I would be the first in line," said 45-year-old Theresa Jones of Detroit.

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Meijer Inc. President Mark Murray describes the retailer's free prescription program on Monday in Southfield.

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Meijer raises stakes with free meds program

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By Mary Radigan

The Grand Rapids Press

Debbie Wyma has seven children, so any break she gets in drug costs will be a welcome relief.

And she expects to get some from Meijer.

The West Michigan-based retailer Monday said it immediately will provide seven commonly prescribed oral antibiotics free at its pharmacies.

"I was very surprised when I heard this," said the Rockford resident, as she filled a prescription for ear drops Monday at the Meijer at 2799 10 Mile Road NE in Algoma Township.

"I'm (at the pharmacy) all the time, and I think this will be a wonderful thing."

So does Amy Stone, of Rockford, who said her two young sons "are sick all the time."

"I'll definitely take advantage of it," she said. "Meijer is probably trying to compete with Wal-Mart and Target (introducing) their cheaper prescriptions."

Meijer has a leg up on its competitors with the free antibiotics, no strings attached, said Patrick Gavin, a consultant for the pharmaceutical industry and retired former vice president of pharmacy for Meijer.

"This not merely a response to Wal-Mart, but (also) taking a new approach to target the core Meijer shopper," he said. "This has the potential of getting things exciting in the prescription drug world and putting the pressure on manufacturers to lower their costs."

Meijer officials said seven types of antibiotics used primarily by children will be dispensed at no charge in pharmacies at the retailer's 176 stores in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky.

As many as 500,000 customers immediately will be affected, and thousands more are expected to come on board, they said. Employees also can get the free medicine.

"This is an opportunity to address quite an urgent issue for children in need of these prescriptions," said president Mark Murray. "Now cost will never be a barrier."

Murray, Meijer CEO Hank Meijer and Dr. Henry Gray, president of Detroit-based Children's Hospital of Michigan, on Monday announced the program at a Meijer in Southfield.

The free generic antibiotics include amoxicillin, cephalexin, ciprofloxacin, penicillin, ampicillin, erythromycin and SMZ-TMP.

"This is certainly good news as families struggle with the cost of medicines," Gray said. "We're pleased to be supportive of (the program) and hope it will have a significant impact on the lives of children in the Midwest."

As long as a customer has a prescription for one of the seven antibiotics, Meijer will foot the bill, Murray said. While the focus is on children, adults also can make use of the program.

The typical costs for the seven antibiotics range from \$10 to \$40 for a 10- to 14-day treatment, said Lisa Meny, a Meijer pharmacist.

"Seventy percent of the generic pediatric antibiotic prescriptions, and 50 percent of the adult antibiotic prescriptions we fill are in these seven classifications," Murray said. "You don't need special cards; there's no hidden fees or forms to fill out."

Murray said Meijer felt this was the most effective way to help customers.

"We know that costs are on the mind of our customers, so we decided to eliminate all of the costs."

Murray said other drug prices will not be raised to compensate.

The free drug program came in part due to Wal-Mart's expansion last week of a program in which 143 generic drugs each cost only \$4, Murray said. Target and Kmart also have introduced low-cost prescription plans.

Wal-Mart's program is available in 14 states -- not Michigan, but including Illinois and Indiana, which are part of Meijer's Midwest market.

"What this really says is that the private sector is getting a lot more aggressive and stepping up to the plate," said Lody Zwarensteyn, president of the Alliance For Health of Grand Rapids. "Meijer is clearly responding to what their industry is doing, and it's for kids, and that's good."

Lynda Zeller, president of Kent Health Plan, a community health program for low-income residents, said it is always a positive step when business addresses affordability of health care.

Byron Township-based Spartan Stores Inc. owns 47 pharmacies as part of its retail division.

"We are continuing to evaluate the generic drug program offered in some markets to determine the long-term value and benefit to our customers," company spokeswoman Jeanne Norcross said.

Press correspondent Kristina Riggle contributed to this report.

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Michigan earns national award for innovative fraud detection in child care and food assistance; effort identified more than \$9 million in fraud

October 24, 2006

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers honored Michigan's Department of Human Services Office of Inspector General (DHS) with a recognition award for innovative use of technology for fraud detection. They presented the award Oct. 17 at the group's 2006 annual conference in Miami, Fla.

In partnership with Michigan Department of Information Technology (DIT), the DHS implemented cutting-edge fraud detection methods. Using a sophisticated data support system DHS used advanced investigative technology in unprecedented ways. Michigan established a national model in innovative techniques to battle day care and food assistance fraud.

"We are very pleased with this recognition," said DHS Director Marianne Udow. "Our mission is to provide appropriate services to low-income families while shepherding precious public resources. This is recognition that we are, with an assist from our partners at DIT, meeting our mission while better managing public resources."

To combat fraud, DHS links provider and recipient data with wage and national food assistance data. In fiscal year 2005 the efforts identified more than \$9.2 million in documented day care fraud to be recovered. This was up from \$3.3 million in 2004, the first year of the data match. In addition, DHS identified Food Assistance savings of \$3.2 million.

"This has been another great partnership effort with the Department of Human Services and another great example of how technology can bring efficiency and cost savings to state government," commented Teri Takai, CIO for the State of Michigan and director of Michigan Department of Information Technology. "We are thrilled with the national attention, but the most important thing is that we are using technology to make Michigan a better place to live, in this case by reducing fraud."

Michigan departments of Human Services and Information Technology are part of Michigan state government. The DHS administers more than \$4 billion in annual benefits and services programs including the federal TANF grant and Food Assistance Program and is the state's child and family services welfare department. The Department of Information Technology was created to achieve a unified and more cost-effective approach for managing information technology among state departments. It is accountable to deliver effective technology solutions to state departments.

National Association of State Chief Information Officers represents 57 state chief information officers and information resource executives and managers from the states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

For more information on the Department of Human Services go to www.michigan.gov/dhs

For more information on the Department of Information Technology go to www.michigan.gov/dit